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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines ways other than drills that students can practice reading methods. Flash cards, software programs, essay projects, and synonym hunts are examples of enjoyable ways for students to practice. In a more formal method of introducing words, a teacher writes words on the board and discusses them before assigning a story with the new words. Students then write a poem, story, or crossword puzzle with the new words as a follow-up activity. The paper also suggests the following as acceptable classroom conditions for learning: respect between students; help from teachers when needed; a reasonable classroom noise level; feedback from teachers; and application of new words. Likewise, the paper suggests the following principles should be emphasized in teaching reading: students should be attentive to new words; reading needs to be conveyed as enjoyable; students should receive help from parents; students should feel comfortable in their learning environment; and students, especially in primary grades, need to be in small classes. It also lists helpful individualized reading approaches such as Silent Reading, Book Buddies, library time, and book reports. (PM)

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Practice in the Reading Curriculum.

by Marlow Ediger

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PRACTICE IN THE READING CURRICULUM

Pupils need to practice what has been learned so that forgetting is minimized. So often, practicing that which has been learned emphasized drill. Interest in learning might then be minimized. The writer well remembers in his grade school years how learning to spell a word from the spelling textbook meant writing each new word from a weekly list five times. This method certainly is frowned upon presently, but the writer has become an excellent speller when writing longhand or using the word processor. Pupils do learn in different ways. It is important to be able to spell words well when using the word processor with spell check incorporated. To be able to use spell check effectively, the typed word needs to be close enough in correct spelling for the former to work effectively.

To assist pupils to achieve as optimally as possible, how should practice be stressed as learning opportunities in the reading curriculum?

Playing Games in Learning to Identify New Words

Learning opportunities need to be varied so that interest in achieving is not minimized, but rather that knowledge and skills are improved upon, resulting in quality attitudes. Flash cards containing the new words to be identified may be printed neatly thereon. There should be no smudge marks on these cards. So often, a smudge mark on the card has made it possible for a pupil to identify a word through drill, rather than viewing the letters which make up the printed word. The flash cards should be used after the words have been introduced and read by the reader in an ongoing lesson. The flash card words are those which the reader has failed to master or additional practice is needed so that over learning has occurred. The teacher needs to notice if the pupil can apply learnings from flash card use to a functional, contextual reading program.

An extension of flash card use could stress a game approach. The flash cards are turned face down on a game board. The game board contains marked sequential rectangles with a beginning and an ending rectangle. Along the way on the game board, the pupil advances a space (rectangle) if he/she identifies the word correctly when a card is placed face up. If an incorrect identification has been given, then the other player may provide the identification. The card may then be placed at the bottom of the pile for "drawing" again in sequence. The first

pupil to reach the ending rectangle or "finish" line is the winner. It is important to develop good attitudes when a game is being played (See Ediger, 1993, 368- 371).

A software program may be developed whereby a frame on he monitor contains four words, one of which is spelled incorrectly. The pupil responds by identifying the incorrectly spelled word. Here, the pupil notices likenesses and differences in individual letters making up the spelling of each word. For example, an incorrectly spelled word may contain an excellent phoneme/grapheme relationship whereas the other three words, spelled correctly, contain irregularities in sound/symbol relationships. Here, pupils may learn selected inconsistencies in the correct spelling of words as well as those which contain the correct sound/symbol relationships. More than one pupil may be involved in responding to sequential items in the program. A collaborative approach may be there when pupils work in teams and discuss among themselves why a word is spelled correctly or incorrectly.

Pupils individually or in teams may be given an essay in which there are word patterns contained therein. The word patterns need identification such as the "man" family (ban, can, fan, pan, ran, tan, van). This family of words is rather rare in that there are a plethora of words which do pattern in spelling. In the essay provided to pupils, there may be selected irregularities in the correct spelling of words which pattern in a family such as in the following: bay (day, gay, hay, lay, may, pay, ray). Thus, the letter "y" is silent in the preceding pattern. The words in the essay may even contain extremely inconsistent patterns such as in the "ough" pattern (through, bough, tough, thought, cough).

The words which pattern in sound with "to" make for a fascinating thinking activity involving brainstorming. There are seventeen words here (too, two, blue, rheumatism, lieu, pew). Dictionaries and glossaries may be used here. Higher levels of cognition are involved as pupils keep adding new words to the pattern being studied (See Garan, 2001).

A synonym hunt can be a fascinating activity for pupils. The activity may be reversed with an antonym hunt. Homonym pairs can also be interesting for pupils. Involved pupils may then learn to identify words and retain these as basic sight words. A variety of interesting games may be played by pupils to assist in recognizing words to use in reading narrative, creative, and expository materials (See Ediger, 1993, 4, 5).

Using Formal Activities to Assist Pupils to Identify Words

Not all activities in learning to read can be based on the playing of games. More formal experiences need adequate emphasis for pupils to achieve objectives in reading instruction. The experiences need to be made as interesting as possible. The teacher needs to make these activities palatable for pupils so that optimal achievement is possible. Prior to reading the new content, pupils must see the possible new words to be read in the ensuing activity. These words may be neatly printed on the chalkboard, large enough for all to see clearly. The teacher may wish to cover all words but the one being viewed and discussed. The contextual meaning as used in the content to be read must be understood by pupils. Meaningful learning is always important! After each word has been viewed carefully and its inherent meaning discussed, pupils need to have questions available in order to read the selection to obtain information to answer each question. If pupils do not identify questions to obtain information to secure answers, the teacher may list interesting questions to stimulate interest in reading. Many times, pupils accept the teacher's purposes for reading content. The questions may be written on the chalkboard for pupil reference as the content is being read.

Followup activities might also provide opportunities for pupils to identify and retain words in print. In the followup experiences, there should be opportunities for pupils to do purposeful writing and use these new words in print. Thus, developmentally, pupils may do the following, among others, involving the use of acquired new words in print: develop a cross word puzzle, write a poem or story, engage in reader's theater, do a dramatization, describe a project completed, label a bulletin board display, and develop a vocabulary chart, in using the new and review words. Pupils need to have ample opportunities in using the new/review words in some purposeful activity so that improved retention is in evidence.

Conditions of Leaning

The classroom environment needs to be such that pupils can learn and teachers teach. Standards of conduct need to be developed an enforced pertaining to achieving a quality environment for reading experiences. The following are recommendable:

1. respect for others is important (See Ediger, 2002, 25-28).
2. acceptance of all in the school and classroom setting is

vital.

3. individual and collective activities must be in the offing to meet pupil needs in learning to read in an optimal manner.

4. assistance as needed in reading endeavors must be stressed.

5. all need to be actively engaged in pursuing reading activities. The noise level needs to be kept at a level conducive to learning.

Additional ways to help pupils attain as optimally as possible, which need to be carefully explained to learners in reading, include the following:

6. obtaining feedback on reading progress needs to be in the offing.

7. securing main ideas and related details enhance reading comprehension.

8. analyzing content and being creative in its use aid in using new words in reading.

9. making application of sight words acquired reinforces retention.

10. staying on task aids in reading achievement.

Principles of learning to emphasize in teaching and learning, in reading, are the following:

1. pupils need to be attentive in noticing new words introduced for reading a given selection. The teacher needs to obtain and keep pupils focused upon these words as well as their use in the ongoing reading activity. A lack of focus upon words, sentences, phrases, and paragraphs makes for inattentiveness to the act of reading. As a result, reading achievement suffers.

2. pupils need to accept reasons for achieving in the area of reading instruction. Thus, reading needs to be perceived as being enjoyable, as a leisure time experience. It is of utmost importance also to be a good reader at the future work place, regardless of the type/kind of work being in evidence. To become a proficient reader, the pupil presently must develop, grow, and achieve on a daily basis. Wasting time is costly in the school setting, since reading achievement is cumulative and tends to follow in a certain order in developing facts, concepts, and generalizations.

3. pupils need assistance in the home setting to extend reading experiences, from that offered in the school setting.

Parents reading aloud to offspring in a proficient manner provides opportunities for pupils to hear and recognize an increased number of words. The story content may be very stimulating for leisure type activities. The subject matter listened to extends and connects with information possessed and being read in school. When readiness permits, pupils should read to themselves and become rampant consumers of information from diverse kinds of trade books. These may be checked out from the school or public library (See Hurst, 2002).

4. pupils may learn to read more effectively through peer endeavors in school. Peers may read aloud to each other as the listener follows along in his /her reader. Peer teaching may be used to obtain help in recognizing unknown words and/or to explain meanings of selected content read.

5. pupils may also learn from individualized reading approaches. These include using individualized reading in place of/or in conjunction with basals as well as in sustained silent reading (SSR). Block and Mangieri (2002) listed the following,among others, commonly cited recreational reading activities by 84 first grader teachers in terms of frequency:

a) DEAR, SSR, Silent Reading.....50
b) Book Buddies,and partner reading..... 43
c) Incentives and stickers..... 31
d). Book sharing and read alouds..... 26
e) Discussion.....20
f) Read in/ book party/ book brunch.....17
g) Accelerated Reader program.....14
h) Reading and listening.....12
i) Library time.....10
j) Students' interest and topic choice.....10
k) Author of the month/Author studies.....8
l) Book swap.....8
m) Contracts.....8
n) Family reading.....7
o) Reading newspapers/ writing .headlines.....7
p) Book clubs.....6
q) Books on audio tape.....5
r) Book reports.....5
s) Contests and raffles.....5
t) Parents read as role models.....5
u) Bookmobiles.....4
v) Computer Books.....4
w) Folk tales.....4

x) Read - a- grams.....3
y) Big books..... 2
z) Building reading trains around the room.... 2.

The above named writers also provide commonly cited reading activities for kindergarten through grade five. By studying these data and comparing with one's own pupils taught, the teacher may be better able to provide for individual differences among pupils.

6. pupils need to have esteem needs met. Recognition received for achievement spurs pupils on to further attainment in reading experiences. Learners need to lean upon the self to achieve as optimally as possible in learning to read and developing well therein. Honest praise given to pupils for accomplishments may motivate pupils to do even better in reading instruction (See Goleman, 1995).

7. pupils need to have safe and secure learning environments. Freedom from violence, rudeness, indifference, and hatred need to be in the offing. University colleagues have frequently discussed with the author how the elementary and secondary school environment had been quite unfavorable at times. Here, the school bully/bullies were difficult people to relate to, in the classroom and especially on the playground. Feelings of fear of the "overlord" had been quite evident. A relaxed classroom environment is needed for pupils to achieve vital facts, concepts, and generalizations in reading instruction.

8. pupils need to be grouped appropriately in the classroom so that the best achievement possible is in evidence. Individuals should not only be there to assist the slower achiever but also to develop and achieve personal knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Thus, each pupil desires to have an appropriate curriculum from which he/she may learn as much as possible. Proper grouping is salient when pupils are taught in reading (Ediger, 2000, 22- 26).

9. pupils need to have social needs met. Each person desires to belong to a group. The feeling of belongingness is strong. Emotional needs are there to be fulfilled. The child who is an isolate has a difficult time in school, even if he/she is adept at mastering subject matter. Where feelings of belonging exist, pupils may assist each other to achieve objectives in reading.

10. pupils on the early primary grade levels, in particular, need to be in smaller class sizes in terms of numbers being taught. They may receive more individualized assistance if the numbers being taught in a room are conducive to providing for

individual differences among learners. Here, teachers may help individuals develop word recognition skills and comprehension abilities (See Varlas, 2002).

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